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Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Wednesday, 27 November 1991, at 10 a.m.

President:	Mr. SHIHABI	(Saudi Arabia)
later:	Mr. OUDOVENKO (Vice-President)	(Ukraine)

- Appointments to fill vacancies in subsidiary organs and other appointments [18] (continued)

  (a) Appointment of members of the Joint Inspection Unit: note by the Secretary-General

- The situation in the Middle East: reports of the Secretary-General [35] (continued)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 18 (continued)

APPOINTMENTS TO FILL VACANCIES IN SUBSIDIARY ORGANS AND OTHER APPOINTMENTS

(g) APPOINTMENT OF MEMBERS OF THE JOINT INSPECTION UNIT: NOTE BY THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (A/46/107 and Corr.1)

The PRESIDENT: As indicated in document A/46/107 and Corr.1, the General Assembly is required, during the forty-sixth session, to appoint five members to fill the vacancies on the Joint Inspection Unit that will arise from the expiration of the terms of office on 31 December 1992 of Dr. Adib Daoudy, Syrian Arab Republic; Mr. Mohamed Salah Eddin Ibrahim, Egypt; Mr. Boris Pavlovich Prokofiev, Union of Soviet Socialist Republics; Mr. Siegfried Schumm, Germany; and Mr. Norman Williams, Panama.

As also indicated in document A/46/107, in accordance with article 3, paragraph 1, of the statute of the Joint Inspection Unit, the President of the General Assembly shall consult with Member States to draw up a list of five countries which would be requested to propose candidates for appointment to the Joint Inspection Unit.

I have held consultations with the regional groups and should like to communicate to the Assembly the following information. The Chairman of the Group of Eastern European States has informed me by letter that the Group has endorsed the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. As the Eastern European States have endorsed one country for one vacancy, that country, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, will be included in the list of countries to be drawn up.

The Chairman of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States has also informed me by letter that the Dominican Republic is the only country

(The President)

wishing to propose a candidate for one vacancy. Therefore, the Dominican Republic will also be included in the list of countries to be drawn up.

In accordance with article 3, paragraph 1, of the statute of the Joint Inspection Unit, the Governments of the Dominican Republic and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics will therefore be requested to propose candidates for appointment to the Joint Inspection Unit.

The Chairman of the Group of Asian States has informed me by letter that the Group has endorsed Jordan. In addition, I have received a letter from the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic indicating that the Syrian Arab Republic also wished to present a candidate.

I have also received letters from the Chairmen of the Groups of African States and of Western European and other States informing me that the following countries wish to present candidates: from the African States, Algeria and Egypt; and from the Western European and other States, Germany, Italy and Turkey.

Since the number of countries from those three regional Groups exceeds the number of remaining vacancies, I should like to consult with Member States through the General Assembly in order to seek their assistance in drawing up a list of the three remaining countries that would be requested to propose candidates for appointment to the Joint Inspection Unit. This would take the form of an advisory vote by secret ballot; although the advisory vote would not be an election, we would follow the rules of procedure of the Assembly governing elections.

If I hear no objection, I shall take it that the General Assembly agrees to that procedure.

It was so decided.

The PRESIDENT: In accordance with existing practice, the required number of countries receiving the greatest number of votes, and not less than a majority of the votes of those present and voting, shall be included in the list of countries to be drawn up.

In the case of a tie vote for a seat, there will be a restricted ballot limited to those States that have obtained an equal number of votes.

May I also take it that the General Assembly agrees to that procedure?

It was so decided.

The PRESIDENT: I draw members' attention to the fact that the following countries already have nationals serving in the Joint Inspection Unit: Zaire for the African States; Indonesia for the Asian States; and Greece and the United States of America for the Western European and other States. Since the Dominican Republic and the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics have already been selected to propose candidates, the names of these States should not appear on the ballot papers.

Before I request the Secretariat to distribute the ballot papers, I should like to remind members of the Assembly that we are now going to proceed to the selection of three countries, one from among the African States, one from among the Asian States and one from among the Western European and other States.

The Assembly at this point is not - I repeat, not - appointing members to the Joint Inspection Unit. It is only selecting three countries which will be requested to propose candidates. Therefore, names of countries and not names of individuals should appear on the ballot papers.

I should like to repeat the names of the countries that wish to present candidates: from the African States: Algeria and Egypt; from the Asian States: Jordan, which was endorsed by the Group, and the Syrian Arab

(The President)

Republic, which wishes to present a candidate; and from the Western European and other States: Germany, Italy and Turkey.

Ballot papers marked "A", "B" and "C" will now be distributed. May I request members to use only those ballot papers.

May I further request members of the Assembly to write on the ballot paper marked "A" the name of one State from among the African States, on the ballot paper marked "B" the name of one State from among the Asian States and on the ballot paper marked "C" the name of one State from among the Western European and other States for which they wish to vote. A ballot paper containing more than one name will be declared invalid. Ballot papers with names of States that are outside the relevant region shall not be counted at all.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Cornejo (Chile), Mr. Lähdevirta (Finland), Mr. Rama (Philippines), Mr. Turay (Sierra Leone) and Mr. Koulyk (Ukraine) acted as tellers.

A vote was taken by secret ballot.

The meeting was suspended at 10.40 a.m. and resumed at 11.25 a.m.

The PRESIDENT: The result of the voting is as follows:

GROUP A

Number of ballot papers:	152
Number of invalid ballots:	0
Number of valid ballots:	152
Abstentions:	3
Number of members voting:	149
Required majority:	75
Number of votes obtained:	
Algeria	91
Egypt	58

GROUP B

Number of ballot papers:	152
Number of invalid ballots:	1
Number of valid ballots:	151
Abstentions:	3
Number of members voting:	148
Required majority:	75
Number of votes obtained:	
Jordan	117
Syrian Arab Republic	31

GROUP C

Number of ballot papers:	152
Number of invalid ballots:	1

(The President)

Number of valid ballots:	151
Abstentions:	0
Number of members voting:	151
Required majority:	76
Number of votes obtained:	
Italy	74
Germany	48
Turkey	29

Mr. STOCKL (Germany): We take note of the results of the vote and thank all the Member States that supported the German candidature for the Joint Inspection Unit. However, in view of the results, we should like to withdraw.

The PRESIDENT: I sincerely appreciate the cooperation of the German delegation.

Mr. AKSIN (Turkey): I should like to express our appreciation to those delegations that supported the Turkish candidature. However, in view of the results of the vote in the General Assembly, Turkey has decided to withdraw.

The PRESIDENT: I also very much appreciate that decision. This spirit of cooperation heartens me.

Having obtained the required majority, I declare that Algeria and Jordan will be included in the list of countries to be drawn up. In accordance with article 3, paragraph 1, of the statute of the Joint Inspection Unit, the Government of Algeria and the Government of Jordan will therefore be requested to propose candidates for appointment to the Joint Inspection Unit.

(The President)

Members have heard the statements just made by the representatives of Germany and Turkey. Since Germany and Turkey have withdrawn their candidatures, Italy is the only country from the Western European and other States wishing to propose a candidate for one vacancy. Therefore, Italy will also be included in the list of countries to be drawn up.

In accordance with article 3, paragraph 1, of the statute of the Joint Inspection Unit, the Government of Italy will therefore be requested to propose a candidate for appointment to the Joint Inspection Unit.

After holding the consultations described in article 3, paragraph 2, of the statute of the Joint Inspection Unit, including consultations with the President of the Economic and Social Council and with the Secretary-General in his capacity as Chairman of the Administrative Committee on Coordination, I shall propose a list of candidates to the Assembly for appointment at a date to be announced in due course.

I thank the Tellers for their assistance.

We have concluded this stage of our consideration of sub-item (g) of agenda item 18.

AGENDA ITEM 35 (continued)

THE SITUATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST: REPORTS OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (A/46/586, A/46/623 and Corr.1, A/46/652)

Mr. BREITENSTEIN (Finland): During the general debate on the Middle East last year, our collective mind was preoccupied by the crisis in the Persian Gulf, by the chain of hostilities unleashed by the Iraqi aggression against Kuwait. The long-lasting Arab-Israeli and Israeli-Palestinian conflicts were momentarily relegated to the background. The outcome of the Gulf crisis, however, acted as a catalyst for renewed efforts to solve these conflicts. Today we can look forward to the future with rekindled hope.

Concerted international action under Chapter VII of the Charter forced Iraq to give up its prey. The principle of collective security has been upheld and Kuwait is again an independent Member State of the United Nations. The steadfast action of the Security Council has sent a message that should be heard loud and clear in all regions of the world, especially the Middle East. The message is that aggression does not pay: aggressors do.

The consequences of the Iraqi occupation of Kuwait have been devastating for all the peoples in the region. Humanitarian emergencies, economic hardship and the damage to the environment continue to cause suffering.

It is important for the security of the Middle East that Iraq be stripped of its arsenal of weapons of mass destruction and of the capability to recreate it. Finland fully supports the efforts of the United Nations Special Commission to this end.

The Middle East as a whole should be turned into a zone free of weapons of mass destruction whether nuclear, chemical or biological. As a first step, all the States in the region, including Israel, should adhere to the available

(Mr. Breitenstein, Finland)

international legal instruments. Other measures of a confidence-building character should be encouraged in the region.

Madrid has entered the international diplomatic vocabulary as a word of hope.

The first stone of a true peace process, the first one since Camp David, was laid in Madrid. For the first time ever, all the parties to the conflict sat down at the same table. A psychological barrier has been breached. Expectations have been created around the world. The Madrid process offers the best available avenue towards peace in the foreseeable future. It enjoys our full support.

The key to the beginning of this true peace process lay in the painstaking process of consultations that preceded the conference in Madrid under the co-chairmanship of the United States and the Soviet Union. We commend the successful efforts, especially by the United States, to bring all the parties into the process. The key to further progress will, we believe, continue to lie in patient consultations between all the parties on an equal footing.

However, peace is up to the parties themselves. No outsider, however powerful and determined, can make peace for them or make it stick against the wishes of the parties concerned. My Government therefore appeals to all the parties concerned to show flexibility and far-sightedness. They have a common interest in a just and durable peace. And, given past history and future uncertainties, so does the international community as a whole.

We deplore all violence in the occupied territories. We emphasize the importance and necessity of scrupulous respect by Israel for the Fourth Geneva Convention.

(Mr. Breitenstein, Finland)

Finland commends the Lebanese Government's ongoing efforts, in accordance with the Taif Agreement, to extend its authority in Lebanon. Recent releases of long-held hostages, which we very much welcome, also point towards normalization of life in Lebanon.

The generally accepted principles for the peaceful settlement of the Middle East conflict remain valid. A comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the region should be based on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973). Acquisition of territory by force, even if in self-defence, is inadmissible. If there is to be peace, Israel must withdraw from territories occupied by it since 1967. Freezing all settlement activities in the occupied territories would constitute an important first step. Israel, like any other State in the region, has to have the right not only to exist but to exist within secure and internationally recognized boundaries. The legitimate rights of the Palestinians, including their right to national self-determination, must be respected.

It is important that the long-standing and manifold United Nations presence in the Middle East be recognized and supported. The three peace-keeping operations in the area, by maintaining local stability within the terms of their respective mandates, help give peace a chance. Several United Nations organs, such as United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), are engaged in valuable work of a basically humanitarian nature. My Government contributes substantially to all of them, whether in terms of money or manpower, or both.

At long last peace in the Middle East again has a chance. The parties to the Madrid peace process owe it to themselves and to the international community to hold on to that chance.

Mr. SALAH (Jordan) (interpretation from Arabic): When I addressed the General Assembly last year on the item entitled "The situation in the Middle East", I wondered whether it was time for this question to be taken off the agenda of the General Assembly and given to some other international forum where serious sustained action could be taken with a view to reaching a comprehensive solution.

Now we meet again to discuss this item. However, this time, we do so in an atmosphere of optimism and hope that stems from the launching of a new peace process at the Madrid Middle East peace conference held towards the end of October 1991.

Are we now going to wonder once again whether the next session of the General Asembly will witness the beginnings of a peaceful, just, comprehensive and lasting solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict so that the Assembly may not have to debate that same item over and over again in the years to come and take it off its agenda as it did in the case of the problem of Namibia and other international problems?

(Mr. Salah, Jordan)

Jordan, which has always supported and responded positively to every peace initiative, has participated in the Madrid Peace Conference in the same constructive spirit because we consider the conference an historic opportunity, that may not come again, for finding a peaceful solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict and its core problem, the question of Palestine.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs of my country, in his intervention at the conference, stated that:

"Jordan [came] to [the] conference in good faith. Our vision is not merely an end to hostility, another truce, but a comprehensive, just and permanent peace."

In Madrid, Jordan spelled out its vision with regard to the desired outcome of the conference, namely the achievement of a lasting peaceful settlement to the region's problems. This can be summarized as follows: First, the basics of settlement are embodied in Security Council resolutions 242 of 1967 and 338 of 1973, which reaffirm the principle of the inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by force, and call for exchanging land for peace through peaceful negotiations. That is why Jordan calls for the withdrawal of Israeli forces from the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967, including Arab Al-Quds, as well as the Jordanian, Syrian and Lebanese occupied territories. Second, the legitimate right of the Palestinian people to self-determination on their own Palestinian national soil. Third, a halt to the illegal building of settlements in the occupied territories, and the dismantling of those that have been built so far. Fourth, a just solution on the basis of United Nations resolutions to the problem of Palestinian refugees and displaced persons. Fifth, the solution of the various problems of the region as a whole and the establishment of

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cooperation between its peoples in the areas of economics, water and the environment. Sixth, machinery for curbing the arms race in the region, especially the elimination of weapons of mass destruction in every shape and form. Seventh, guarantees of security for all the States and peoples of the region.

Jordan stated that notwithstanding the difficulty of the task and the complexity of the problems, it felt that there now existed an opportunity for putting forward new creative ideas and for the establishment of true peace provided all the parties concerned showed a genuine political will to do that.

A few days ago, from this rostrum, the representative of Israel told us in his intervention on the question of Palestine, that there was no return to the past and that the Arab demand for Israeli withdrawal to the pre-1967 borders was, according to him, illogical, unfair and immoral. I do not propose here to reply to what was said by the representative of Israel, but I would like none the less to dwell for a moment on those particular assertions. We find a strange paradox in those assertions of the Israeli Ambassador, because the Arab demand, which is the demand of the international community as a whole, is based on international legality and derives its logic, its fairness and its moral character from the principles of this Organization's Charter and resolutions. We must not forget that this is the Organization which legitimized the very existence of Israel. The Israeli representative was not content to lock himself up, in the past, in that statement, but also chose to forget completely the fact that Israel itself was built on the grounds of a feat of time travel to a far distant past.

There are two basic requirements for the success of the peace process which was started in Madrid and which is based on international legality: First, the existence of a genuine will for peace on the part of all the

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parties concerned. It is the will for peace which will write the history of the present and the future. It is the will for peace that manifested itself in the olive branch carried by Palestinian youths, women, mothers and fathers in the occupied Palestinian territories, in support of the peace conference. It was those some defenceless hands which carried the stones of the intifadah that is now in its fourth year, to express rejection of the occupation and call upon the conscience of the world to put an end to that occupation. It is the same will for peace that moved Israeli mothers to rally round the Palestinian mother, Dr. Hanan Ashrawi, member and spokesperson of the Palestinian delegation, when Dr. Ashrawi was threatened by arrest and detention. This is the will for peace that has to overcome all obstacles, because real security cannot be built by force or territorial expansion. Rather, it has to be built in the hearts and minds of people, and in their visions for their long-term future.

Secondly, the ability to move beyond the actualities of the present with its occupation, displacements, deportations and killings, to a better future for the region's future generations. In order for that future to be prosperous and happy, there must be a place in it for all the peoples of the region, so that they may contribute to its making. This must include the Palestinian people, who have endured the injustices of occupation and exile for far too long.

Jordan was true to itself and to its principles when it hastened to agree to the holding of the second stage of the negotiations in Washington in the belief that the important thing now is to maintain the current momentum of the peace process and not to waste time on side issues. We have before us a major task which deserves all our efforts, our time and our energy.

(Mr. Salah, Jordan)

We must work as hard as we can to ensure the success of that task. That means that what is needed now is not to limit ourselves to focusing on confidence-building measures - important and essential as they are - but to work for the achievement of genuine peace through which the peoples of the region may confidently build a better future for the coming generations.

Mr. ARIDOR (Israel): This time, I have no reservations regarding the agenda item before us - "The situation in the Middle East" - for our region is indeed worthy of the dubious distinction of having an agenda item named after it. Not every region receives such consideration. But the Middle East is very much a world unto itself: it is an island suspended in the past, unswayed by the waves of change sweeping the globe. In the past few years we have all marvelled at the fall of totalitarianism and communism in Eastern Europe, the rise of democracy in Latin America and Africa, and the progress in South Africa. Indeed, the momentous events of the past year have demonstrated that, even as the world is perhaps entering a "new world order", the Middle East remains mired in "old world disorder".

There is a predicament in the Middle East, and there is a "situation in the Middle East", but neither the predicament nor the situation emanates from Israel. It is not Israel that poses a danger to the Arab States; it is the Arab States themselves that pose a danger to each other, as well as to Israel.

In the past year the illusion of intra-Arab brotherhood has been rudely shattered before the entire world - not once, but twice. Two of the most powerful Arab States in the region - Syria and Iraq - decided to go hunting, and they attempted to bag Lebanon and Kuwait, their smaller and more vulnerable neighbours. Although Iraq was eventually defeated, Syria continues to grasp its prey.

(Mr. Aridor, Israel)

While this Organization chose to look the other way, Syria pounced on Lebanon and took away its independence. The "Kuwaitization" of Lebanon is complete. Syria can now enter the record-books as the only Member State of the United Nations with two votes rather than one.

The Syrian-Lebanese Treaty of 22 May 1991 was little more than a bill of sale. Hafez Assad went shopping, held a gun to the storekeeper's head, and came home with Lebanon in his pocket. The so-called Treaty of Brotherhood, Cooperation and Coordination formalized the so-called right of Syria to keep its occupation army on Lebanese soil and to intervene at will in Lebanese foreign and domestic affairs. It is a gross violation of the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and of the general principles of international law.

Of course, Syria's violation of Lebanon's independence is well masked in the text of the Treaty. But the world is not so naïve that it does not see through the mask. We know of precedents in which the same masks were used, to the same effect. In the past, one of these masks was the term "protectorate". In today's Middle East it is known as a "Treaty of Brotherhood".

Although the world marshalled the necessary courage and resources to turn back Saddam Hussein's act of aggression in Kuwait, Syria's belligerence has been allowed to pass largely without comment. One would have thought that the lesson emanating from the Gulf War was that aggression does not pay. Now one has to realize that that statement must be qualified: aggression does not pay, unless one uses it shrewdly.

East of Syria, Saddam Hussein's brutal invasion of Kuwait was but one element of the multifaceted war he has been waging. Not only was it a war against Kuwait - it was a war against the regio[illegible] it was a war against the

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Earth. It is a war against Saddam Hussein's own people, and it still is a war against the entire world.

The invasion of Kuwait was a direct challenge to the principle that force should not be used to resolve disputes between nations. It was a flagrant affront to the principle of respect for the independence and sovereignty of nations. At the same time, by setting fire to Kuwaiti oil wells and dumping oil into the Persian Gulf, Saddam Hussein declared war on the Earth itself.

It was also a war between the ruler of Iraq and the Iraqi people. The Kurds of Iraq were once again terrorized and persecuted at the hands of the Government in Baghdad. The recent interim report on the situation of human rights in Iraq, which was prepared by the Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights, states that during the Kurdish uprising earlier this year

> "indiscriminate bombardment of residential areas ... reportedly killed hundreds of civilians, while numerous refugees on the Arbil-Salahuddin and Rewanduz-Haj Omran roads were reportedly attacked by helicopter gunships". (A/46/647, p. 9)

Hundreds of thousands of Kurds were forced to flee their homes in the wake of the Iraqi army's onslaught against them.

The fate of others is no better. The Iraqi Government does not hesitate to use torture, and, according to Amnesty International's 1991 report,

> "the methods used reportedly included prolonged beating all over the body, breaking of limbs, extinguishing cigarettes on the body and in the eyes, gouging out of the eyes, electric shocks, sexual assault and mock executions."

Given the threat that Saddam Hussein posed, the Gulf War was in every sense a moral war. As President Bush himself stated on 25 July 1991,

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"It was just, it was moral, and we did the right thing. And who can doubt this now, knowing, as we do, just how close Saddam Hussein was to possessing nuclear weapons and the means to deliver them ...?".

For years Israel has been warning of the dangers of Iraq's nuclear programme. International safeguards and agreements to which Iraq was a party failed to prevent Saddam Hussein from coming treacherously close to building nuclear weapons. Our warnings having gone unheeded, Israel decided 10 years ago to act by bombing Iraq's Osirak nuclear reactor. Acting with typical shortsightedness, this Organization chose to condemn Israel. But now the evidence is available for all to see. It seems that each inspection team uncovers further proof of the wisdom of Israel's daring raid 10 years ago.

Indeed, the report submitted by the Executive Chairman of the Special Commission established by the Secretary-General pursuant to operative paragraph 9 (b) (i) of Security Council resolution 687 (1991) should be required reading for those who chose to overlook Saddam's attempts to acquire weapons of mass destruction over the years.

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Iraq originally claimed that it did not possess any biological weapons or related items. However, according to the report, when the first biological inspection team was sent to carry out its task,

> "Iraqi officials admitted on the team's arrival in Iraq to having carried out a programme of biological research for military purposes which, it was made clear, could have been used for both defensive and offensive purposes." (S/23165, appendix IV, para. 26)

Iraqi officials told the team that research had been carried out for approximately four years, but that all stocks had been destroyed in August 1990. The report notes that

> "At a subsequent stage in the inspection, however, the team was given bacterial seed stocks which indicated that Iraq had also possessed... micro-organisms which are considered as biological warfare agents." (ibid.)

In a letter to the Secretary-General dated 7 July 1991, the Foreign Minister of Iraq stated that in an accompanying memorandum he would "give an account of our peaceful nuclear programme". The report, however, notes that

> "indisputable evidence of an extensive Iraqi nuclear weapons development programme has been obtained." (ibid., appendix III A, para. 4)

This Organization must now confront the danger to the world that Iraq's nuclear programme represents. The threat of nuclear blackmail from a country such as Iraq, an idea once confined to the realm of fiction, now stands out as a real possibility. The Iraqis obviously saw the whole enterprise as a game of hide-and-seek. They hoped to win the prize of nuclear power, with which they could blackmail the world. This would have transformed the game of hide-and-seek into a game of death for millions of people.

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While evidence of Iraq's vast programme continues to appear, we now await the publication of the list of companies behind Saddam's shopping spree. Those countries that did not stop their own companies from helping Iraq in its quest for the bomb must now learn the lesson of their inaction. We warn everyone now, once again, of the danger of arming a dictator in the Middle East. Saying "We did not know" is simply not good enough. For had Saddam acquired a bomb, protestations of innocence would have been of no use. After the holocaust, the claim that "We did not know" does not help. Death industries must not get any support. So we warn everyone once again to prevent dictators in the Middle East from being armed, before it is too late.

And yet, despite the Iraqi bomb of Damocles which hung over the entire region, the Arab States continue to claim that it is Israel that threatens regional peace and stability. Earlier this year, a senior Arab official said,

> "All that we want to say is that we are interested in a just and honourable peace in the region; the essence of the issue is the Palestinian question."

That statement, believe it or not, was made by the Kuwaiti Foreign Minister, Sheikh Sabah al-Ahmad, on 27 February 1991, even as the Gulf War was still raging. The Foreign Minister was not only in exile from his country: he was also in exile from reality. Judging from his comments, one would think that it was Israel that had invaded Kuwait.

More recently, on 1 October 1991, the Assembly was told, that

> "...people are now becoming convinced that there is a need to deal expeditiously and effectively with the main conflict in the Middle East and with the core issue, the Palestinian question." (A/46/PV.17, p. 37)

This statement was made by none other than the Foreign Minister of the United

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Arab Emirates, whose country might have become the United Iraqi Emirates were it not for the good will and efforts of the coalition forces.

In a letter sent on 17 January 1991, following the beginning of the allied air attack on Iraq, by the Permanent Representative of Jordan to the Secretary-General, it was stated:

> "The leadership, Government and people of Jordan condemn the brutal assault in the early hours of today on a peaceable Arab country and people - one that has always hastened to the assistance of its brother Arabs ..." (S/22099, p. 2)

The peaceable country referred to in the letter was, believe it or not, Iraq. With peaceable countries like that, it is no wonder the Middle East has so many problems.

The King of Jordan has joined in the peace process that is under way. But in the past year, he displayed a remarkable tendency simply to go with the flow. At the beginning of the year, he toed Saddam Hussein's line, only to fall in with Syria once the war ended. I cannot give advice to the King, but he should know this: when one sits by the tiger while it is having dinner, one should not be surprised if it is hungry again for breakfast.

The Arab States know the truth. They do not really fear us. They know that their own house is not in order, and that it was not Israel that made the mess. So let us not turn this debate into a replay of the "Question of Palestine". There are real issues that need to be addressed, and focusing on Israel only serves to divert attention from them.

Our region desperately needs stability, and the surest guarantee of stability is democracy. Unfortunately, however, the prospects for democracy in the Arab States are not encouraging. The Middle East suffers from four

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basic characteristics: tyranny, fanaticism, petrodollars and the terror belt. This is a dangerous combination of bad intentions and vast capabilities.

Tens of millions of people in the Arab world continue to be governed by representatives they have not elected, presidents they have not chosen and systems they despise. Their thoughts and feelings are imprisoned, unable to find expression without fear. The predominant form of freedom in most of the Arab world is the freedom to be afraid.

The art of terrorism was long ago perfected in the Middle East. If one looks at a map, one can see an arch consisting of Iran, Iraq, Syria and Libya. These members of the terror belt employ various groups and organizations, and they measure their success in the number of corpses they produce. The terror-belt countries have no qualms about blowing up aeroplanes, ambushing buses or taking hostages. It is all part of doing business. They are the arch-terrorists of the terrorist arch.

The four countries that constitute the terror belt were all listed as "State supporters of terrorism" in an April 1991 report by the United States State Department, "Patterns of Global Terrorism: 1990". According to the report, the 30 May 1990

> "abortive seaborne attack by the Palestine Liberation Front (PLF) on crowded Israeli beaches was made possible by Libyan Government support for the training, provision and transportation of the PLF terrorists."

Libya also continues to

> "fund other radical Palestinian groups...and to support terrorist groups elsewhere in Africa, Latin America and Asia."

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Iran's support for terrorism is described by the report as "extensive" and its activities have included "targeting and assassinating Iranian dissidents overseas, attacking Saudi officials and interests, continuing to support the holders of the American and other Western hostages in Lebanon, and supporting radical Palestinian groups..." Syria "continues to provide support and safe haven to groups that engage in international terrorism" and Iraq assembled "an impressive array of terrorist groups aimed at intimidating the international coalition" against its invasion of Kuwait. Making matters worse, the "terror belt" is equipped with a large money belt, thanks to the region's vast quantities of oil. Only determination by the free can deter devastation by the wicked.

In addition to terrorism, the Middle East is plagued by fanaticism, which does not even entertain the idea of compromise. To the fanatics, everything they want is sacred, therefore nothing else is sacred. We have all seen the tragic consequences of this mentality time and time again.

It is this combination of tyranny, terrorism and fanaticism which is the source of instability in the Middle East. And it has nothing whatsoever to do with Israel, except that Israel is the agreed-upon target of these three dangerous trends. Thus, to focus on Israel in this debate is to mis-focus. Seeking to destabilize the one country in the region that is anti-tyranny, anti-terrorist and anti-fanatic only contributes to regional instability. The singling out of Israel in this debate only serves the purposes of those who profit from and encourage the region's turmoil.

The crux of the matter is that non-democratic regimes such as those which prevail in the Middle East cannot be relied upon to guarantee stability. The past few decades in the Middle East have been riddled with numerous examples

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of Arab governments rising and falling. These unstable non-democratic regimes are time-bombs waiting to go off in the crowded room that is our planet. Just as one cannot sit on bayonets, so too one cannot make friends with time-bombs.

Various countries continue to sell massive amounts of arms to these non-democratic regimes which are bent on mischief. Syria's massive arms build-up, which includes the purchase of enhanced Scud missiles from North Korea capable of hitting Israel demonstrates its propensity for causing trouble. One cannot help but be reminded of Act IV, Scene 1, of Shakespeare's "Macbeth", when the three witches stood over the boiling cauldron, chanting "Double, double, toil and trouble; fire burn and cauldron bubble." The Middle East is a cauldron waiting to boil over, and today's witches know who they are. International controls failed miserably in the Iraqi context. Agreements must be reached on arms control between the parties concerned.

In the course of this year, a number of initiatives and plans on disarmament and arms control were made public. Israel supports all efforts aimed at restraining the arms race in every corner of the world. We hope that in the context of the direct peace talks that are now underway, the issue of the reduction and control of arms will be discussed.

Israel has, for over a decade, been proposing and has joined others in proposing a nuclear-weapons-free zone in the Middle East. Israel has also, throughout the years, joined the consensus of the General Assembly on this issue, because it supports the general concept.

However, in considering any specific blueprint for the Middle East, either on the conventional or on the non-conventional issues, due consideration must be given to the constraints and conditions prevailing in our region. Therefore, the indispensable prerequisites should include, inter

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alia, free and direct negotiations among the States concerned, and the introduction of mutual arrangements promoting trust among the States in the region.

As the representative of the United States, Ambassador Jack Stein, told this Assembly on 27 November 1990, "In the first instance, the United States does not support attempts to institute an internationally recognized zone of peace by General Assembly resolution. We believe that such zones of peace can be established only through multilateral negotiations by the relevant parties."

The obvious first step is for those Middle Eastern countries that are prone to reason and logic to gather together to address these issues. First and foremost, peace must be made with Israel. If you look on the map, you will see that the countries of the region have a choice between the four countries of the northern "terror belt" and the two countries of the southern "peace belt". Israel and Egypt are the first link in the "peace belt". Let us lengthen the belt as much and as soon as possible.

The Arab States must cease with the charade of branding Israel as the fountain of all their troubles. Similarly, this body must cease joining the Arabs in their verbal assaults. Hurling insults at Israel serves no productive purpose and it ignores reality. Despite the repeated Iraqi Scud missile attacks against us earlier this year, Israel exercised self-restraint. We got the missiles. We got the compliments for self-restraint. Once the missiles were over, so were the compliments.

Last year, in this debate, I mentioned the refugee crisis in the Middle East. I pointed out how little the Arab States have done in practical terms to match their rhetoric of concern for their brethren. Nothing has changed in

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the interim. Though the number of UNRWA beneficiaries continues to rise each year, the Arab States have shown little willingness to raise their paltry contributions for the betterment of their brethren. Bahrain has pledged a mere $15,000 for the over 2 million beneficiaries of UNRWA programmes. Tunisia has pledged $12,435 and Oman $4,000. This amounts to a few cents for each refugee, which means that the Arab States want the problem to continue. They want to exploit the suffering of the refugees and use it as a tool in their campaign against Israel. That too must change.

Before the Arab States dare to point their fingers at others in accusation, they should recall just what they have done with their own hands to the Palestinian Arabs. Indeed, a report by Middle East Watch entitled "Human Rights in Syria" of September 1990 summarized the plight of Palestinian Arabs in Syria by stating that "the Assad regime has much to correct in its dismal human rights record towards Palestinians, whom it defends so loudly in official propaganda, and treats so badly in practice". This is one instance where actions truly do speak louder than words.

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Allegations about the treatment of Palestinian Arabs in Kuwait were confirmed by the Kuwaiti Ambassador to the United States, who told the Washington Times on 17 June 1991 that the Palestinian Arabs pose a security threat to his country, and:

"If people pose a security threat, as a sovereign country we have the right to exclude anyone we don't want."

According to the Ambassador, Kuwait would not be renewing work and residency permits for most of the Kuwaiti Palestinian Arabs, so that:

"Down the road, they're going to realize they don't have a job in Kuwait, no source of income, so they will have to leave."

Such are the words of those who trumpet the cause of the Palestinian Arabs.

The Jews of Syria continue to live as prisoners, unable to emigrate freely and subjected to intensive monitoring and surveillance under the watchful eyes of the Syrian security services. They cannot reunite with their family members abroad and they live in daily terror. Six Syrian Jews languish in prison simply for trying to exercise their basic human right to emigrate. We shall spare no effort to reunite them with the Jewish people. We shall do everything humanly possible to free them. They are our brothers and our sisters, and we shall not forget them. We, the Jews, will not forsake our brothers and sisters.

That is the situation at present. Perhaps the future will be better. Soon, it is to be hoped, there will be bilateral and multilateral negotiations among the countries of the region, at which issues of common concern can be raised and discussed. These talks contain the potential for forming a basis of cooperation among the countries of the region. Cooperation is the surest way to bring prosperity to the region. But there are still obstacles in the

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will to cooperate. A high-level conference on water problems in the Middle East was scheduled to have been held at the beginning of this month in Turkey. But Syria objected to the fact that Israel would be present, and the conference was therefore cancelled. Nevertheless, we are ready to make peace even with Syria, in spite of its regime. Such is our commitment to the quest for peace.

If the Arab States are serious about solving the problems of the region, then the path is clear. Stop pinning the blame on Israel, and start addressing the real problems of the region. Stop financing terror, stop yielding to the forces of fanaticism, and put an end to tyranny.

This Assembly should break with past years and turn this debate into a productive exercise. Let the problems of the Middle East finally get the attention they so desperately require. If we can move away from the rhetoric of the past, and seize the opportunity which history has now presented us, there stands a chance of real progress. Here in the United Nations we are mostly preoccupied with monologues. The real dialogue will be outside the United Nations in the bilateral and multilateral direct negotiations that are due to take place. And maybe, if we work together, we can revive the Middle East as a cradle of civilization.

Mr. O'BRIEN (New Zealand): I think a sense of optimism does pervade deliberations on this item. In less than 12 months the situation in the Middle East has changed profoundly for the better. Through the collective will and determination of the Organization, Iraq's illegal occupation of its neighbour Kuwait has been brought to an end. And now, for the first time in more than 40 years, the parties to the Arab-Israeli-Palestinian conflict have sat down at a table and talked to each other. We are entitled, I think, to hope that, despite the major difficulties to be overcome, this is the

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beginning of a process that will end in a comprehensive, just and enduring solution to the conflict and to the question of Palestine that lies at its core.

Regrettably, Iraq's obduracy in the face of the expressed will of the Organization necessitated the use of force to eject it from Kuwait. More happily, the parties to the central problem of the Middle East are seeking to settle their differences by peaceful means on the basis of long-standing resolutions passed by the Organization. This is commendable and deserving of our full support.

New Zealand gave full and prompt support to all United Nations resolutions during the crisis in the Persian Gulf. We participated in the multinational force and provided assistance with humanitarian relief efforts. Since the war's end, New Zealand has continued to participate in the international effort. This includes assistance with the United Nations Special Commission which is disposing of Iraq's weapons of mass destruction, and New Zealand officials are serving with the United Nations Border Commission to survey and then demarcate the Kuwait-Iraq border.

New Zealand contributed to the international effort during the Gulf crisis for reasons of principle, not because of any wish to involve itself directly in the political and military affairs of the Middle East. We can all take satisfaction, I think, that the leadership shown by the United Nations in the exercise of its undoubted moral authority was an essential factor in facilitating the expulsion from Kuwait of Saddam Hussein and his army. The legacy of war though will remain for some time. The environment of the Gulf region has suffered considerable, and possibly irreparable, damage.

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The Gulf war has certainly highlighted the need to work on arms control in the Middle East. Had Iraq used chemical weapons, the victory by the multinational force could have been much more costly. Had Iraq waited a few more years until its nuclear-weapons programme was more advanced, the consequences could have been catastrophic.

Removing Iraq's weapons of mass destruction should help alleviate some of the concerns of Iraq's neighbours. But further steps are required. There has been a vast inflow of armaments into the Middle East in recent decades and an indigenous arms industry has also begun to develop. There is now an overwhelming need to control the spread of weapons into the region. In this respect, New Zealand welcomes the initiative of the United States, the United Kingdom, France, China and the Soviet Union to exercise restraint over arms transfers to the region. Further efforts, both multilateral and regional, will be needed to reduce instability.

New Zealand has long held that if a peaceful solution is to be found to the Arab-Israeli dispute, all the parties concerned will have to demonstrate a commitment to negotiate a settlement. Until recently that had not been the case. The perseverance of the United States broke a political logjam that had impeded direct bilateral talks. The historic Madrid meeting, convened with the Soviet Union, initiated a new phase in the search for peace. This could not have occurred without the willingness of the parties themselves to put aside previous reservations and to take part.

We are all very familiar with the long history of this dispute, the complexity of the issues, and the views of the main parties. Now that this first important step of face-to-face bilateral talks has been taken, it is

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New Zealand's hope that the parties will have the confidence to build on this and continue in a constructive and conciliatory way not only the bilateral discussions but also the talks on regional issues. All parties need to display both a determination that the talks will succeed and the flexibility needed to enable solutions to be reached. It is heartening to know that these talks are due to resume imminently.

(Mr. O'Brien, New Zealand)

Of all the parties involved in the talks the Palestinians have the most to gain. They, more than others, have long been the victims of the failure to reach a comprehensive settlement in the region. They have also had to endure a harsh military occupation in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip where they have been denied their legitmiate rights. It is therefore pleasing indeed to see the representatives of the Palestinian people taking their place at the negotiating table in the joint Jordanian/Palestinian delegation.

The parties have engaged in the talks on the basis that the objective of the process is a comprehensive settlement on the basis of United Nations Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973). New Zealand's position has long been that these resolutions provide the basic principles for a comprehensive and just solution.

We are all aware that these resolutions place responsibilites on the various parties. They recognize that every State in the area has the right to live in peace within secure and recognized boundaries free from threats or acts of force. Israel clearly has that right. The resolutions also emphasize the inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by war and call for the withdrawal of Israeli forces from territories occupied during the course of the 1967 war. We regret that Israel has only partly complied with this call. In our view the land-for-peace formula remains as valid today as it was when it was first enunciated 24 years ago.

New Zealand also holds that any solution must recognize the rights of both sides to the dispute. One is Israel's right to be accepted among the nations of the Middle East and to be certain of its security. Of equal importance is the right of the Palestinians to self-determination, including

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the right to establish their own State if that is their wish. The Madrid talks provide the opportunity to participate in negotiations to determine what shape their homeland might ultimately take. That the Palestinians have accepted that this will be an incremental process and will require compromise on all sides is a positive step, even if in the short term it means that their aspirations are not immediately fulfilled.

It has been suggested that the peace process could be enhanced by the parties making unilateral gestures of goodwill. We agree. We urge Israel to cease its practice of building new settlements in the occupied territories, a practice that is rightly regarded as a fundamental obstacle to peace. We also support the call for the Arab States to reciprocate by lifting their trade boycott of Israel. We hope that all parties will demonstrate their commitment to resolving past differences by taking such steps.

A further positive sign in the region has been the welcome progress made towards establishing peace and security in Lebanon. My Government wishes the Lebanese Government every success in its efforts to restore peace, stability and economic prosperity. Lebanon is one of the parties to the bilateral peace talks with Israel, and we note in this regard that United Nations Security Council resolution 425 (1978), which calls on Israel to withdraw its forces from all Lebanese territory, has not yet been complied with.

We seem to be entering an era which is witnessing a new willingness in our world to reach negotiated settlements in place of the military stand-off and political deadlock. Nowhere would the same attitude be more welcome, more widely beneficial, than in the Middle East. All the parties to the Arab-Israel conflict have within their grasp the potential to capitalize upon the process so imaginatively begun in Madrid to produce a comprehensive, enduring and just settlement.

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The best contribution that we can make in this body, through our debates and in its resolutions, is to foster this process by discarding the rhetorical debris of the past, and by conveying hope and encouragement for the future.*

Mr. ABULHASAN (Kuwait) (interpretation from Arabic): Last year, the world witnessed, and it still continues to witness remarkably positive developments with regard to the traditional hotbeds of conflict. The world has viewed those developments as harbingers of good news. It has been keen on keeping their momentum with a view to resolving such conflicts, replacing the climate of crises, tensions and pessimism with détente, peace and optimism and harnessing the world's scarce resources for development purposes.

Undoubtedly, one of the main reasons for the achievement of such positive developments was the ending of the cold war between the two blocs and the increased coordination between them towards the achievement of a common vision of peace by the two super-Powers.

Moreover, the United Nations now has a pronounced role in forging the framework designed to resolve such regional conflicts. The leading role of the United Nations in the international effort to liberate my country, Kuwait, from the claws of Iraqi aggression and occupation was one of the most telling examples of the capabilities and the role of the United Nations in the application of the principles of international legality. We also perceive the United Nations now in the forefront of the international community, leading most successfully the process of peace in Afghanistan, Cambodia and the western Desert.

Against this background, which is cause for optimism, thanks to the unfolding international developments, the Middle East remains the region that,

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* Mr. Oudovenko (Ukraine), Vice President, took the Chair.

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most regrettably, is deprived of the benefits of the current international developments. Israel still occupies Palestinian territories in the West Bank, the Gaza Strip and Al-Quds, as well as the Syrian Arab Golan and parts of southern Lebanon.

Israel still refuses to recognize the Palestinian people's right to self-determination and the establishment of its State on all its national soil. Israel is still an obstacle that defies the will of the international community which is harnessing all its capabilities so that the positive developments which have been taking place in the world may benefit the Middle East. Israel does this through its ongoing programme of illegal settlements in the Arab occupied territories, through such actions as the recent enactment by the Israeli Knesset of legislation that prevents the ending of the annexation of the Syrian Arab Golan, and through the destruction by Israeli authorities of documents that relate to Palestinian property as in the case of the confiscation of the files and legal documents of the Al-Quds Shariah Court.

On the other hand, the Israeli war machine is still employed in undermining the last remnants of life in southern Lebanon, which it occupies - as if the intention is not only to continue to occupy but also to eradicate every possibility of achieving peace in Lebanon, to obstruct its recovery and to prevent it from rebuilding what has been destroyed by the hostilities of the last few years.

Throughout the last 40 years, the Middle East region has witnessed many wars and conflicts which threatened the peace of the world and the security of the region. The region also paid an exorbitant price in wasted resources. The principal reason for this has been the lack of a just and equitable solution of the Palestinian issue in accordance with resolutions of the United Nations.

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Golden opportunities have been missed because of the contradictions and posturings of the States of the region and some of their régimes. Had those opportunities been seized, the peoples of the region would have been spared a great deal of killing, devastation and depletion of resources.

It is our joint responsibility now not to repeat the mistakes of the past. Nor must we relinquish the rights stipulated by United Nations resolutions. We must eschew polemics, diatribes and rhetorical posturing and display wisdom and farsightedness.

The international effort led by the United States of America and the Soviet Union in the context of the Middle East peace process is based on the solid groundwork established by Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), with the clear aim of granting the Palestinian people its inalienable right to self-determination and of bringing about a complete Israeli withdrawal from the occupied Arab territories in order to achieve a lasting peace on the basis of the resolutions of international legality.

It is our collective responsibility to spare no effort in supporting this endeavour and ensuring its success. We advise all parties not to miss this opportunity and to benefit from the lessons of the recent past.

As we follow the progress of the Middle East peace conference, which began in Madrid last month, we note that the Arab States and the Palestinian people have shown flexibility and have responded positively to the current international developments. This has earned them the sympathy and admiration of the world, especially that of the major Powers. The Arab States and the Palestinian people have demonstrated their sincere and genuine desire for an

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honourable, just end to this problem, and for an opportunity to channel the region's potential and resources to the well being of its peoples.

But Israel, as it has always done, obstructs this internationally accepted approach. It hides behind fallacious concepts of its own making which expose its expansionist bent and the fact that it does not wish to coexist in peace within internationally recognized boundaries with the Palestinian people, which must live on its own national soil with its capital Al-Quds, or with the other Arab States. Israel wants to redraw the map of the region in line with its own objectives and philosophy. This is inadmissible under the terms of the covenants and instruments of international legality, the resolutions of the United Nations and the concepts of the new spirit now prevailing in the world.

Therefore, Israel is called upon now to show full understanding of the imperatives of the day and of the nature of the change that has taken place in international relations and hasten to take the confidence-building initiatives of: first, immediately and completely halting the building of settlements in the occupied Arab territories; secondly, halting the inflow of immigrants, who are now being used as justification for the building of additional settlements; thirdly, desisting from any action, practice or the enactment of any legislation that may prejudice the legal status of the occupied Arab territories, including Al-Quds and the Syrian Arab Golan; fourthly, halting completely all its military operations in southern Lebanon and its intervention in the internal affairs of that country.

(Mr. Abulhasan, Kuwait)

The quintessence and cornerstone of peace in the Middle East is withdrawal by Israel from the occupied Arab territories and the exercise by the Palestinian people of the right of self-determination and the establishment of its own State. Without that, the peace endeavour will not succeed and Israel will be held responsible for missing the opportunity which we have all waited for.

While applauding the efforts of the United States of America and the Soviet Union and expressing appreciation for their noble motives, Kuwait believes it is time to bring to book those who cause the world to miss that opportunity and who dash our hopes for peace.

Just peace has a price. For the sake of such peace, we are willing to pay that price in order to ensure a decent life for the peoples of that important region of the world.

The PRESIDENT: In accordance with the provisions of General Assembly resolution 3369 (XXX) of 10 October 1975, I call on the Observer of the Organization of the Islamic Conference.

Mr. ANSAY (Organization of the Islamic Conference): I am grateful for this opportunity to address the General Assembly on an issue of such extreme importance to the Organization of the Islamic Conference.

I am pleased to highlight the strenuous efforts made by the United Nations since its inception, and especially during the past few years, to solve regional and international problems so as to bring about international peace and security, as well as progress and prosperity for numerous nations and peoples.

(Mr. Ansay, Organization of the Islamic Conference)

The Middle East, though, has long been a volatile and unstable region. The prime cause for this has, unfortunately, been the intransigence of Israel. We in the Organization of the Islamic Conference have always noted with deep regret and grave concern that the main cause of instability in the region is the denial by Israel of the Palestinian people's inalienable rights, including their right to self-determination without interference, their right to return to their homeland and their right to establish an independent Palestinian State.

Since the establishment of the State of Israel, the Palestinian people have been subjected to violence and terrorism brutally perpetrated by the Israeli forces of occupation, as is evident from their acts of detention and torture, their brutal oppression of innocent men, women and children, their expulsion of people from their own homeland, their demolition of the homes and the destruction of the cultural institutions of those people, their desecration of the sanctity of holy places of worship, and their establishment of illegal settlements in the occupied territories, all of which are practices perpetrated daily by Israel, practices the Palestinian people have valiently and confidently resisted.

During all these years, the Palestinian people have fought continuously against occupation, injustice, oppression and bondage in order to achieve their inalienable rights, including the right to return, the right of self-determination and the right to the establishment of an independent Palestinian State on their national soil.

(Mr. Ansay, Organization of the Islamic Conference)

As the Palestinian popular intifadah near its fifth year, the number of its martyrs has reached more than 1,000 souls. Every day, more victims continue to fall. What is taking place in occupied Palestine reflects a new and serious element in the struggle of the Palestinian people against oppression.

For the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) and for more than 1 billion Muslims all over the world, the liberation of Jerusalem and the Palestinian land is a prime cause, because of its justness and because of the fact that Jerusalem - Al-Quds al-Sharif - is the first Qibla and the third holiest place for all Muslims.

As I have said on numerous occasions from this rostrum, we believe that the question of Palestine is at the core of the Middle East, and that at the heart of the Palestinian question lies the problem of Al-Quds al-Sharif, the continued aggravation of which constitutes a grave threat not only to the stability of the region but to the peace and security of the world at large. Thus, the Palestinian question has a dimension that goes far beyond the occupied territories.

Israel, which was founded by virtue of a United Nations resolution, ignores, defies and refuses to comply with United Nations resolutions and to deal with the United Nations. Israel's stubbornness and refusal to receive the representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations - whose mission, under Security Council resolutions 672 (1990) and 673 (1990), is to investigate the massacres which Israel perpetrated in the courtyard of the Al-Haram al-Sharif - are further evidence of Israel's persistence in its aggressive policies.

(Mr. Ansay, Organization of the Islamic Conference)

The Organization of the Islamic Conference welcomed the convening of the Middle East peace conference held in Madrid under the joint sponsorship of the United States and the Soviet Union. The Secretary-General of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, in a statement made on the occasion of the opening of the Middle East conference, paid tribute to the efforts made by the international community and particularly by the United States for the convening of the Madrid conference, which he considered a crucial step for the history of the countries and the peoples of the region and also for the consolidation of international peace and security.

In his message addressed to United States President George Bush and Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev, Dr. Hamid Algabid, Secretary-General of the OIC, expressed the OIC's support for the peace efforts in the Middle East and reiterated the Islamic Ummah's confidence that these efforts will continue in the future for the attainment of a just, durable and comprehensive solution to the Palestinian problem and the Arab-Israeli conflict. The Secretary-General also affirmed that the only way to achieve such a peace in the Middle East is to discontinue the construction of Israeli settlements in the occupied Palestinian and Arab territories and to enable the Palestinian people to exercise its legitimate rights, including its right to self-determination in accordance with international legitimacy.

In his reply to this message, which was released yesterday, the President of the United States emphasized that peace in the Middle East should be a real, comprehensive, just and lasting one, and not a mere cessation of belligerency in the region.

(Mr. Ansay, Organization of the Islamic Conference)

President George Bush welcomed the OIC's support for the peace efforts and expressed the view that this support is necessary and important for the attainment of the common objective of peace on the basis of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973). In the same message he also cautioned that the peace process would be neither rapid nor easy. However, he pointed out the need for the momentum to be maintained and for the involvement of all parties in the quest for peace, and expressed the hope that the OIC will use its influence in this direction.

It is pertinent to recollect here that the twentieth Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers held in Istanbul, Republic of Turkey last August, expressed its appreciation and support for the efforts being made to find a solution to the Middle East problem. The Islamic summit to be held in Dakar, Senegal next month will no doubt scrutinize the current developments in this regard.

In our opinion it is significant to underline that the future negotiations which will take place in the framework of the peace conference must be based on the full implementation of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), as well as on the basis of the principle of land for peace. But, alas, what we are observing for the time being is a quite different picture. Today's United States broadcast reports, for example, inform us that Israel has declined to come to Washington, D.C. for the continuation of the peace talks. Can this be the correct attitude for a peace-loving, peace-seeking State? Or is it the reaction to an invitation for peace of a State that is not ready for peace?

(Mr. Ansay, Organization of the Islamic Conference)

By defying the peace process, the Israeli authorities have settled, are settling and plan to settle the newly arriving immigrants in the occupied Palestinian territory, in violation of the pertinent resolutions of the United Nations and the Fourth Geneva Convention prohibiting the occupying Power from deporting or transferring parts of its own civilian population into the occupied territory. This plan and the massive exodus of Jews to occupy Palestine constitute a serious threat to the security and stability of the region and aim to further change the demographic character of Palestine.

A just, comprehensive and lasting settlement of the question of Palestine and the Arab-Israeli conflict requires as a quid pro quo the freezing of the process of establishing settlements in the occupied Palestinian and Arab territories, the complete withdrawal of Israel from all the territories occupied since 1967, including the city of Al-Quds al-Sharif and the Syrian Golan Heights, as well as from southern Lebanon and the exercise by the Palestinian people of its inalienable rights.

The Organization of the Islamic Conference and the entire Islamic Ummah are profoundly committed to the cause of Jerusalem, the first Qibla of Islam. No solution can be comprehensive if it does not guarantee its international character as well as the withdrawal of Israel from that sacred city and its return to its rightful people.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.